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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: SPAIN: POLICE ARREST 11 ISLAMIST EXTREMISTS IN
CEUTA

REF: A. MADRID DAILY REPORT DECEMBER 12
[B. 13](#)

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[11](#). (U) Spanish National Police arrested ten Spanish nationals and one Moroccan national in the North African enclave of Ceuta on charges that the men were plotting to carry out a terrorist attack. Among the detainees were two brothers of former Spanish national Guantanamo detainee Hamed Abderrahaman Ahmed (known in Spain as the "Spanish Taliban," whose conviction on terrorism charges was overturned earlier this year by the Spanish Supreme Court. (NOTE: The Court threw out evidence against Abderrahaman gathered at Guantanamo and in prior telephonic intercepts by Spanish police. END NOTE). According to initial reports, the 11 men are accused of membership in either the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM) or the related "Al Haraka Salafiya Jihadiya" organization. The arrests (code named "Operation Dune") were ordered by the high-profile Magistrate Baltasar Garzon and involved approximately 300 Spanish officers, including a large contingent that arrived in Ceuta from mainland Spain. Spanish police first began monitoring the suspects in the spring of 2005.

[12](#). (U) In announcing the arrests, Minister of Interior Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba said that the group had not selected a specific target, but was in the initial stages of planning for an attack. Other police sources report that the suspected extremists was considering strikes against a fairground/convention center in Ceuta, or possibly a military armory. Subsequent reports indicate that the cell had established contact with three Muslim soldiers in Spain's Ceuta garrison with the aim of obtaining weapons and explosives. Police did not find any weapons, but seized extremist propaganda, computer equipment, cash, and cell phones. According to press reports, some police officials in Ceuta complained that the arrests had cut off an important source of intelligence and had been unnecessary since the plotters were not ready to act.

[13](#). (U) Observers note with concern that several of the arrests took place in the Ceuta neighborhood of "Principe Alfonso," which is gaining a reputation as an extremist hotbed. A recent report by University of Granada Academics Javier Jordan and Humberto Trujillo focused on troubling elements in this community of 27,000, including the relative poverty of Principe Alfonso, the presence of an active drug trafficking network, increasing signs of religious extremism,

and the near absence of a police presence in the neighborhood. According to their report (which post shared with EUR/WE and S/CT), individuals in Principe have vandalize police facilities and ambushed police cars in recent years. Residents of Principe Alfonso told reporters that police had overreacted in carrying out Operation Dune and community leader Laarbi Mohamed described the detainees as "good boys who had never caused any problems." See para 5 for additional information regarding the detainees.

//COMMENT//

14. (SBU) Police doctrine under the Zapatero Government has stressed disruption of potential terrorist plans, even at the cost of risking sources and methods or moving before sufficient evidence has been gathered to guarantee convictions. There is undoubtedly a political element as well, since Zapatero has been at pains to demonstrate that he is as tough on terrorists as former President Aznar was and does not want to risk the execution of any attack. Regardless of any possible political motivations, these arrests are certain to stoke growing fears that Islamist extremists intend to target Spain's control of enclaves in Ceuta and Melilla. The detentions may also draw scrutiny of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the conviction of Hamed Abderrahaman Ahmed despite ample evidence of his involvement in extremist activity.

//OPERATION DUNE DETAINEES//

15. (U) This is the biographic data that was immediately available. We expect more detailed biographic information shortly:

-- Mohamed Fuad Mohamed Abdelelam (DOB: 1971) was identified as the leader of the group.

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-- Abdeldrim Chaib Abdelaziz (DOB: 1976)

-- Mohamed Tarik Chaib Abdelaziz (DOB: 1977). Brother of Abdeldrim Chaib Abdelaziz.

-- Hlasin Mustafa Mohamed (DOB: 1982)

-- Karin Abdeselam Mohamed (DOB: 1974)

-- Mustafa Abderrahaman Ahmed (DOB: 1976). Brother of "Spanish Taliban" Hamed Abderrahaman Ahmed.

-- Yusef Abderrahaman Ahmed (DOB: 1983). Brother of "Spanish Taliban" Hamed Abderrahaman Ahmed.

-- Reduan Ahmed Abderrahaman (DOB: 1980)

-- Ahmed Abderrayat Laarbi (DOB: 1968)

-- Ahmed Mustafa Mohamed (DOB: 1982). Mustafa Mohamed had a letter in his possession from Tarek Hamed Hamu, who was arrested in "Operation Tigris" in June 2005 for helping organize the travel of extremists to fight in Iraq.

-- Rachid Mustafa Mohamed (DOB: 1974). Brother of Ahmed Mustafa Mohamed. Rachid Mustafa Mohamed was reportedly an employee of the Ceuta municipal police.

AGUIRRE